

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 HA-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /077 W
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R 291055Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7154
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 2379

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, UR, PK, IR, AF
SUBJECT: ARE THE SOVIETS REALLY SATISFIED OVER AFGHAN-
PAKISTANI RAPPROCHEMENT?

REF: MOSCOW 5271

1. SUMMARY. BEWARE OF SOVIETS SMILING OVER AFGHAN-PAKISTANI
RAPPROCHEMENT. END OF SUMMARY

2. PARAGRAPH 3 OF THE REFTEL HAS REOPENED AN ISSUE WHICH HAS
LONG BEEN A POINT OF FRIENDLY CONTENTION BETWEEN EMBASSIES
MOSCOW AND KABUL. ADDRESSING OURSELVES SOLELY TO THE DEVELOPING
RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, THIS EMBASSY IS
NOT SO SANGUINE AS EMBASSY MOSCOW OVER THE TRUE SOVIET REACTION
TOWARD THESE IMPROVING BILATERAL RELATIONS. FROM THE HISTORICAL
VIEWPOINT, THE SOVIETS HAVE ALWAYS PROVIDED OVERT AND COVERT
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SUPPORT TO THE AFGHAN SIDE WHENEVER THE LATTER ELECTED TO HEAT
UP THE HOARY PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE. IN OUR VIEW, THEIR PRINCIPAL
MOTIVATIONS IN THE PAST HAVE BEEN: (A) TO CREATE TROUBLE FOR
PAKISTAN, WHICH FOR MUCH OF ITS EXISTENCE HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED
AS AN ANTI-SOVIET CLIENT-STATE OF THE U.S; (B) TO PROVIDE SU-
CCESSIVE AFGHAN REGIMES WITH SOLID EVIDENCE OF THE VALUE OF
SOVIET FRIENDSHIP AND COLLABORATION; (C) TO FORCE THE AFGHANS

TO BECOME MORE DEPENDENT UPON SOVIET TRANSIT ROUTES; AND (D)
TO KEEP THE REGION FRAGMENTED AND DESTABILIZED.

3. IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT AFGHANISTAN'S PRESIDENT DAOUD, THE FOREMOST PROPONENT OF "PUSHTUNISTANISM," HAS HIMSELF DECIDED TO COOL THAT ISSUE IN FAVOR OF IMPROVED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH PAKISTAN, THE SOVIETS CAN NOW HARDLY BE "MORE CATHOLIC THAN THE POPE." ADDITIONALLY WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOVIETS POSSIBLY HOPE TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN IN THE WAKE OF THAT COUNTRY'S REEVALUATION OF ITS TIES WITH THE U.S. SINCE MOSCOW IS APPARENTLY ALSO WORKING ON BETTER BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH TEHRAN, THEY MAY ALSO NOT WANT TO ANNOY OR ALARM THE IRANIANS UNNECESSARILY AT THIS STAGE (THE SHAH REGARDS HIMSELF AS THE FATHER OF THE "SPIRIT OF KABUL" DETENTE). FOR THESE REASONS, WE ARE NOT SURPRISED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE CAUTIOUSLY MAKING POSITIVE PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF "SATISFACTION" OVER THE IMPROVING REGIONAL SITUATION. WE HAVE HAD RECENT EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY ARE PRIVATELY POORMOUTHING THIS DETENTE IN CONVERSATIONS WITH AFGHAN OFFICIALS WHOM THEY REGARD AS FRIENDLY.

4. ALTHOUGH WE AGREE THE SOVIETS ARE PROBABLY NOT LIKELY TO SABOTAGE AFGHAN-PAKISTANI RAPPROCHEMENT WHILE DAOUD WANTS IT, THEY CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE PREPARED TO JOIN IN STIRRING UP TROUBLE AGAIN WHENEVER THEY SEE TEMPTING TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY OR PERCEIVE THAT THEIR OWN LOCAL INTERESTS RE INVOLVED.
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THE PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE IS MUCH LIKE THE VOLUME DIAL ON A RADIO. IT CAN BE TURNED UP OR DOWN BY DAOUD -- OR, TO A LESSER DEGREE, BY CERTAIN OTHER PUSHTUN NATIONALIST LEADERS, SOME OF WHOM ARE THOUGHT TO BE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOVIET INFLUENCE.

5. IN SUM, WE ARE GRATIFIED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT INTER-FERRING UNDULY WITH THE CURRENT AFGHAN-PAKISTANI RAPPROCHEMENT, BUT CONTINUE TO WATCH THEM WITH A SKEPTICAL AND BEADY EYE.
ELIOT

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